

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, February 17. 1708.

I Am unwilling to burthen you with long dwelling upon one Subject, knowing the Temper of the Town, and for that Reason have left the farther Particulars, by which I could have entertain'd you on the Subject of the *East-India* Prohibition, to a farther Time—— I think that Affair is so plain, that 'tis rather to be wonder'd at, that any of our *East-India* Company Gentlemen could entertain a Thought of getting it repealed, than that the Parliament should crush that Motion in its Beginning—— But 'tis a Proof, that Men, who pursue their own abstracted Interest, seldom examine their own Schemes, by the good or evil Effects which may influence their Country—— And the Result is plain, that such Men are therefore to be guarded against as carefully as the worst Enemy.

I return now to my first Foundation, from whence I drew this Argument, viz. That as by the Accident of the War, our Trade has felt new Revolutions and Convulsions; so in order to prevent the ill Consequences of the War upon our general Commerce, we ought to study to give it new Turns, and make one Part Amends out of the Ruin of another.

Here I might give you a new Scene of Commerce, in several Articles, which may turn to our Advantage; and I'll begin with two material Points in Foreign Trade—And I confess, our not taking hold of the Advantages offer'd us in both, is one of the greatest Tokens of our present Infatuation, that I can give Instances of, and these are our Trades to *Spain* and *Newfound-Land*.

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A mighty Work has been made here in Parliament and out of Parliament, in Pamphlets and in our Discourses, of the exceeding Value of our *Newfound-Land Trade*; mighty Murmurs have been raised at suffering the *French* to insult us there, and of the Neglect of our Officers and Squadrons, in seizing and securing the little Colonies planted there for our Fishing; and vast Calculations we have had laid before us of the Benefit of that Trade, the Shipping it would employ, the Seamen it would breed up, and the Trade it would make there—And I shall not enter here into the ill-natur'd Particulars—Perhaps the Complaints have not all been without Cause—Our Gentlemen of the Sea have not been the Men of the least Faults; but that is not the Business here; we have Clamourers enough, and Noise enough made; I wish Men would rather push their Complaints into legal Prosecutions, as the *Jamaica* Men do now in the Case of *Commodore Kerr*, than be ever railing about Generals and Universals, and never come to Particulars.

But I am not a going to tell you who are Kn—s; will you bear with me to tell you who are F—s? And in this perhaps I may be plainer than you can bear—Have you lost the *Newfound-Land Trade*?—Shall I say, I wish it were not only lost to you, but entirely destroy'd, and would GOD in his Providence forbid the Fish coming to the Banks, you ought to petition her Majesty for a Procession to *St. Pauls*, and a Day of Thanksgiving for so signal a Blessing.

What is this mad Man a doing now, says another? Our *Newfound-Land Trade* is voted in Parliament to be of great Consequence to the Nation; our Enemies, it is apparent, make themselves rich out of it, they employ great Numbers of Ships and Men, and we might easily take it from them, and make it our own; and he is for destroying it! the Man is turn'd to the Enemy; he writes for the *French*, and the like.

Well, Gentlemen, go on—But I shall soon make out what I say, will you look round you?—Have you no Place in the World to make your selves Amends for this remote, difficult and hazardous Trade?—What think you of an EQUIVALENT?

The Word is almost made a Peculiar to us, since a late Transaction, like the Word Ab-dication upon the Revolution—Well, now for an Equivalent to the *Newfound-Land Trade*. Pray, Gentlemen, will you remember, that there was a Nation in the World call'd *Scotland*—And when we were perswading the *Scots* to unite with us, and told them, what fine Things they might get by it, among the rest, none made so much Noise among you as the Fishery.

I confess, I was more silent in the Matter of the Fishery, than any Body; and tho' I was industrious to my Power in laying before the *Scots* the real Advantages of Trade by the Union, yet I was never very full of the Fishery, and if I must tell you the Truth, it was because I was never for offering imaginary Advantages to the *Scots*, but real Ones; of which, I hope, they will find the Benefit.

And shall I tell you why I was not so fond of the Fishery there, as to raise Arguments from it, to urge the Union upon the *Scots*; my Reasons are plain, tho' perhaps not so well natur'd as you may expect.

1. I see a great many Impracticables in the Way of the great Advantages, which we are told, the Herring-Fishing might rise to, and I do believe, Subscriptions, Companies, and Stocks put into it, would all be ineffectual; that the *Scots* do already carry that Trade on the best Way it can be done, and within a small Matter to the full Extent it can be improved to, unless some Obstacles were removed, which it is not in the Power of all our Projectors to overcome; and if any Man, that is of a contrary Opinion, will be pleased to let me know his Reasons, I will not fail to give him, as far as I can, a fair and a useful Answer.
2. I did not urge this, as I say above, because in the other Part of their Fishing, which I allow may be improv'd, yet I am satisfy'd, it cannot be done without the Concurrence of *English* Stocks, and *English* Application; and I never had Experience enough of our Forwardness to open our own Eyes, or our Zeal;

Zeal; to make good our Pretences, to promise much for my own Country that Way.

Indeed, if it was a National Concern, I would hope, the Government would keep Faith; but as to Promises meerly popular, unless you will assure the World, that you always pursue your own Interest, he must be a mad Man, that will promise for you. when at the same time 'tis evident, that you act against the true Interest of your own Trade in almost every Article of it.

But when I am telling you of *Scotland*, as to the White-Fishing, I am telling you of something, which perhaps every Body does not know, and few will be willing to believe, and therefore I shall be a little particular in it.

I know but one Offence I can commit in pursuing this Argument, and that is in telling you here, you may both advantage your selves, and at the same time enrich *Scotland*, and thereby expose that wicked Principle, too much spreading among us, and propagating more and more every Day, (*Viz.*) That we must not make the *Scots* too rich.

I confess, when I had the Happiness to see the Union with *Scotland* effected, in

which I count it my Honour to have had some little Share, and a second Kind of Honour that I have had here no Thank for my Pains; I say, when I saw this Union concluded, I was in Hopes, we should for the future have taken the People of Scotland for our own, counted their Wealth our own Prosperity, and made their Prosperity our Concern.

But since an extraordinary Temper is prevailing among us, to alter these just Notions, I do not know, but the Vein of this Splenetick Blood may run so high, that we will not get Money our selves, because the *Scots* must be Gainers with us.— And this indeed may be one mighty Objection against what I am upon.

Remove this, and I'll answer for it, there can be but one Reason more, why we should not remove all our *Newfound-Land* Trade to the *N. West of Scotland*— The Fish is the same, the Voyage shorter, the Shore better, the Curing easier, and the Quantity as great— But what is this Objection, says one now? Oh, a very material One indeed, 'tis a Party Cause, and why not Parties in our Trade, as well as in our Religion; 'tis a strong Objection, *Presbyterian* Fish! This is the Matter, and if this can be removed, I desire Men and Devils to raise another.

MISCELLANEA.

I Cannot but observe, that among the many Complaints presented to the Parliament for Regulation, we have a great Noise made against the *Garbling-Office*— I shall say very little to it, but by Way of Allegory, which perhaps may be useful enough in its Kind —

The *Garbling-Office* is an ancient Thing practised in the first Ages of Trade, and confirm'd in the Mayor and Commonalty of the City of *London*, by the Statute, 1 *Jacob.* and is to appoint Inspection to be made into several Sorts of Goods, more particularly subject to Frauds, Mixtures and false Package, in order to cleanse them, and make them Merchantable, and to preserve fair and just Dealing between Buyer and Seller.

I have not much to say to it, but this; it has in all Ages been thought a most necessary Law, and all the Complaints I ever met with against it, have been only the same, that lie against most of our wholesome Laws, *viz.* That they are not vigorously executed.

I shall not say, but that our Age being grown so much honester than our Fathers, and our Merchants so much fairer Dealers than their Predecessors, *Cujus contrarium verum est*, we may have less need for such an Office than they had.

Nor will I make an Answer in Behalf of the *Garblers*, I know not who they are, to the mighty Objections of their Opposers, tho' I think it the easiest Thing in the World to do

do it— But this I must say, that in my Opinion, with all possible Submission to the Vote of the House, to pull down the Fence of this Law from Trade, is to lay our Commerce open to all Manner of Frauds, and may, I had almost said must, in Time sink the Reputation of our Goods in all Places— When they shall be sold full of Soil, Unsound and Unmerchantable.

I own, I much wonder'd in some of their Papers to see an Argument brought against garbling or cleansing our Goods, because the *Dutch* do it— Which to me seems the weakest Thing in the World, and is the strongest Argument, why we should do it also; for these Reasons, which is all I shall say to it.

1. If the *Dutch* cleanse their Spices, and have brought them to a Reputation by it, it is an unanswerable Reason, why we should do the same by such Drugs, Dye-Stuffs, &c. as do not come to us from them, and are yet uncleansed.
2. To say the *Dutch* do cleanse their Spices, is an Argument for us to review them; since it is most certain, that all true packing and right preparing Goods is occasion'd by the Certainty of their being view'd again at every Market; and if once they come to know, that we take them at Hazard without Garbling, it is just telling them, they need not trouble themselves to do it— And to say we need not garble, because of the Reputation of the *Dutch*, is to say, I need not tell my Money, because he was an honest Man that paid me.

When I have also noted, that all the Complainers, I see, against this Office, are such as seem to want a Liberty to sell Goods uninspected, which in *English*, is a Licence for a fraudulent Trade; I no more wonder at the Clamour being very great.

How far the Lord-Mayor, and Common-Council, and fair Merchants may think

themselves unconcern'd in this Affair, is not for me to determine, or to say, they neglect their Duty in it, and the Oath of a Freeman; but this I may say, after they have left it off, they ought no more to weigh our Bread, or gage our Pots, try our Measures, or inspect our Markets, and all our Corn-Meters and Coal-Meters Places may be levell'd as publick Grievances, and ought to be petition'd against upon the same Foot.

And now I am talking of Garbling, I wish, the H.... of C..... would listen to a Project of Mine— What think you, Gentlemen, of a *Garbling-Office* for the whole Nation?— Bless us, what Work would this make among us, especially if impartially executed! If the Unclean were to be taken out from among the Clean, the Goats parted from the Sheep, what a little little Company of convertible People should we have among us— What Work would this *Garbling Office* make, and what should they deem as the Soil among the Spice, what should they call Unmerchantable.

Should they determine to pitch upon Parts, and fall upon Species—and really garble us thoroughly, what a Condition should we be left in?

When from Courts were taken our Flat-teries, from Parties the Intrigues, from P..... the Briberies, from Counsellors the Factions, from the Fleet the Cowards, from the Army the Faggots, from the Clergy the Erroneous, from the Laity the Immoral, from our Gentry the Debauch'd, from the Commonalty the Brutal, from the Men the Fops, from the Women the Whores, from the Court the Beaus, from the Town the Cuckolds; bless us, what Work would a *Garbling-Office* make among us!

They say, this Garbling is begun already among us; a little Time will shew us, how far it will proceed; let it go through us all, say I, and we shall the sooner find out the Bottom of all our Misfortunes, especially if the Garbling Officers are very impartial.